

<sup>2</sup> OWCP assigned the present claim File No. xxxxxx848.

No. xxxxxx609.<sup>3</sup> Appellant noted that he first became aware of his hand condition and its relation to his federal employment on October 5, 2017. He stopped work on July 12, 2019.

In a January 22, 2020 development letter, OWCP advised appellant of the deficiencies of his claim. It requested additional factual and medical evidence and provided a questionnaire for his completion. OWCP afforded appellant 30 days to respond.

By decision dated March 6, 2020, OWCP denied appellant's occupational disease claim, finding that the evidence of record was insufficient to establish that the alleged work factors occurred as described.

The Board, having duly considered the matter, finds that this case is not in posture for decision. OWCP's procedures provide that cases should be administratively combined when correct adjudication of the issues depends on frequent cross-referencing between files.<sup>4</sup> For example, if a new injury case is reported for an employee who previously filed an injury claim for a similar condition or the same part of the body, doubling is required.<sup>5</sup> Herein, appellant's claim under OWCP File No. xxxxxx609 also involves an injury to his left shoulder. For a full and fair adjudication, the case must be returned to OWCP to administratively combine the current case record with OWCP File No. xxxxxx609. This will allow OWCP to consider all relevant claim files and accompanying evidence in developing appellant's current occupational disease claim. Following this and other such further development as deemed necessary, OWCP shall issue a *de novo* decision.

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<sup>3</sup> OWCP File No. xxxxxx609 was accepted for derangement of the left acromioclavicular (AC) joint.

<sup>4</sup> Federal (FECA) Procedure Manual, Part 2 -- Claims, *File Maintenance and Management*, Chapter 2.400.8(c) (February 2000).

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*; *L.M.*, Docket No. 19-1490 (issued January 29, 2020); *L.H.*, Docket No 18-1777 (issued July 2, 2019).

**IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT** the March 6, 2020 decision of Office of Workers' Compensation Programs is set aside and the case is remanded for further proceedings consistent with this order of the Board.

Issued: April 29, 2021  
Washington, DC

Alec J. Koromilas, Chief Judge  
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

Janice B. Askin, Judge  
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

Patricia H. Fitzgerald, Alternate Judge  
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board